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TREVANION;

OR, THE FALSE POSITION.

BY

WESTLAND MARSTON, Esq.,

AND

BAYLE BERNARD, Esq.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

TREVANION;

OR,

THE FALSE POSITION.

A Play,

IN THREE ACTS,

BY

WESTLAND MARSTON, Esq.,

Author of "The Patrician's Daughter," "Strathmore," &c.

AND

BAYLE BERNARD, Esq.,

Author of "Lucille," "The Farmer's Story," &c.

FIRST REPRESENTED AT THE

ROYAL SURREY THEATRE,

MONDAY, OCT. 22, 1849,

UNDER THE JOINT LESSEESHIP OF

MESSRS. SHEPHERD AND CRESWICK.

LONDON:

C. MITCHELL, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET;

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Trevanion (*a Man of Fortune*) . .	Mr. CRESWICK.
Knightly (*his Steward*)	Mr. BRUCE NORTON.
Michael Langford (*a Ship Carpenter*)	Mr. EMERY.
Adams (*his Foreman*)	Mr. BUTLER.
Vox (*a Village Oracle*)	Mr. H. WIDDICOMB.
Skillet (*his Sub.*)	Mr. ROGERS.
Auguste	Mr. J. W. COLLIER.
Roberts	Mr. E. NEWTON.
Margaret Langford	Madame PONISI.
Mrs. Langford (*her Mother*) . . .	Mrs. WATSON.
Mrs. Lorimer	Mrs. HENRY VINING.
Miss Hornet	Miss LAPORTE.
Williams	Miss BLOOMFIELD.

Workmen, Miners, &c. &c.

Scene of the First Act on the English Coast and in Paris; Second and Third Acts in London and on the English Coast.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE I.—PARLOUR OF A COTTAGE,

Opening through door and window at back on a Ship Carpenter's Work-yard. Table laid for tea.

[MRS. LANGFORD *is discovered arranging the table.*

Mrs. L. There, now—all's ready, and it won't want a relish; it's been a hot day to-day, and he'll be tired enough.

[*Workmen now pass across at back,* LANGFORD *following, and entering from the yard.*

Workm. Good night, Mr. Langford; good night, sir—good night.

Lan. Good night to you, lads. Well, Lizzy—tea ready? That's right my love, it was never more welcome; that boat we're upon is a wearying job. [*He takes off his hat and apron, and sinks into a chair.*] There now, that's comfort—every muscle enjoys it. Arm-chairs, I really think, were first made for ship-carpenters; even if they haven't such a thing as spring seats to scare you, as though you had dropped upon something alive.

Mrs. L. La! Michael, take your tea.

Lan. Certainly, love, and as much as a Chinaman; I've a throat a yard long. Well, now, people, they tell us, are never contented, and yet I fancy if I could always stretch out in this fashion, there's not another blessing I'd wish in the world—and yet, what do I say—not another? Ah! Margaret.

Mrs. L. Well, well—we shall hear from her to-day, Michael.

Lan. Well, I hope so, indeed, as it's so long past the time; to-day, at the latest, we ought to have news.

[VOX *is heard outside.*

Vox. Very well, very well—I shall step in for a moment.

Lan. Eh! Mr. Vox, our great newspaper man, who fires a shot every week about parish abuses—a wonderful man for making much out of nothing; a sort of chap who'd build a ship out of three sticks of timber.

Vox. [*looking in at the back.*] How are you, friends—how are you? At tea, I perceive.

Lan. Yes, sir, we are, and would be happy if you'd join us.

Mrs. L. Yes, Mr. Vox—pray do?

Vox. Well, I thank you, I will. I rather like tea. Tea is essentially an intellectual beverage. You remember, I suppose, my attack on the Paving Board? Well, sir, that letter was written under the influence of tea!

Lan. Was it indeed, sir? [*Aside.*] Then it strikes me there was a good deal of water in the pot.

Mrs. L. Now, Mr. Vox.

Vox. Thank you, Mrs. Langford. You saw my last letter—that case of the bird's-nest? Did you ever know such an outrage on mind and humanity? What were the facts? A poor bricklayer's boy, allured by the charms of nature, strays into the fields—he sees there a tree; prompted

by the love of knowledge, he mounts to explore it, and, over-staying his time, he's discharged by his master—a master who thus crushes all his love for the beautiful, and arrests even the progress of scientific inquiry!

Lan. [*aside.*] And all this on a bird's-nest! What would he say on a pigeon-house?

Vox. But eh! bless my soul, I was forgetting my errand. I've some tidings I think you'll be happy to hear. [*He pulls out a newspaper.*

Lan. What, of Margaret?

Vox. Herself. You're expecting a letter?

Lan. Yes, sir—from Switzerland.

Vox. Well, here's a London paper, and in the Paris arrivals—

Lan. Her friend, Mrs. Lorimer. Yes, Lizzy, yes—so now all's explained; this journey, you see, has prevented her writing.

Mrs. L. Of course it has, Michael.

Lan. Well, thank you, Mr. Vox, we're very much obliged to you; for, to tell you the truth, we were getting uneasy, as she's been always so regular sending every month to us.

Vox. Well, really your daughter's is a very strange story,—though, to be sure, there's no doubt she was a very strange girl, showing talent so early—only fourteen when she began to write verses.

Lan. Only fourteen, sir.

Vox. And gained, among others, the notice of Lady Evesham.

Lan. Exactly; by something she wrote on her ladyship's birthday.

Vox. And what's more, so elegant; quite a marvel of manners when only a child.

Lan. She was, sir, she was; didn't curtsey like other girls—always talked so softly, and glided like when she moved; wore her little bonnet with a sort of an air; and as she grew up, she seemed born for a carriage. The wonder was always to see her enter my door.

Mrs. L. And yet, with it all, there was no pride in her, Michael.

Lan. No, Lizzy, no; humble as her home was, she didn't love it the less. If her fancies went up like the lark's wings, her dwelling, like its nest, was still on the ground.

Mrs. L. So you may suppose, sir, it cost us no little to part with her, proud as we were of her—and she, too, our only one.

Lan. No common pang, sir, a girl so worth loving; but still, when we saw her health so suddenly breaking, and Lady Evesham kindly offered to take her abroad—

Mrs. L. Why of course we were thankful; and as she doesn't forget us—

Lan. No, sir; her letters still come to us, like her voice, full of sweetness. We think we see her face in them.

Vox. Well, and then—let me see, at her ladyship's death she went to live with a young baroness she met with in Germany.

Lan. Yes, sir; and under her roof she saw Mrs. Lorimer—

Vox. That very rich person—her present protector—excellent, clever girl, played her cards famously.

Lan. Played her cards! And do you think, sir, she cares only for herself?

Vox. Well, and why not? What's self-interest but virtue? Who can be good that isn't happy?—and who happy that isn't prosperous?

Lan. Then the more a man's paid, sir, the better he grows?

Vox. No question of that; the more justice he gets, the more he dispenses.

[ADAMS *looks in at the back.*

Adams. Oh, if you please, sir, Miss Hornet's been here.

Lan. Miss Hornet?

Adams. Yes, sir, about the gate which you promised to make for her.

Lan. Eh—as I live, I forgot all about it. I ought to have done it yesterday; but what with thinking of Margaret, and other affairs, I—

Adams. And as she is going to the post, she said she'd step in again, sir. [*He disappears at the back.*

Vox. Well, of all my aversions, that woman is the greatest!

Mrs. L. Miss Hornet, sir?

Vox. Miss Hornet—that mass of pretension—whose vanity 's enough to make a whole city modest.

Mrs. L. Why we thought, Mr. Vox, that you liked her so much.

Vox. Liked her, indeed! I endured her, perhaps; that I couldn't help; for she's a sort of flue that will stick to any man of distinction; but the woman's my horror. Such a terrible temper—almost as bad as a cupping-machine; you can't touch her, but you feel a dozen lancets immediately.

Lan. Well, that's very true, sir.

Vox. A creature, in fact, who's so much my dislike that—

[MISS HORNET *enters at the back.*

Miss H. Good evening, Mr. Langford.

Lan. Ah, good evening, Miss Hornet; I hope I see you well, ma'am; pray take a seat; have you had tea, ma'am?

Miss H. Tea, sir! why hardly. I thought it was known that our family hour has been six for a century.

Lan. Has it, indeed, ma'am? Well my kettle, you see, hasn't such regular habits.

Vox. [*aside*] The infamous jilt; why she wont even see me!

Lan. But do take a seat, ma'am—or let me bring this; this is a soft one. [*Bringing her a chair; a post horn is heard.*] Why, Lizzy, what's that?

Mrs. L. The post, Michael.

Lan. It is. And with a letter, I'm sure of it.

Mrs. L. Then they'll bring it soon; and—

Lan. Bring it—and can I wait with my heart beating in this way? They'd be slow if they flew with it. My wife, ma'am, will talk to you; but, if you please, I can't stop. Margaret! Margaret!

[*Throwing aside the chair, he runs out at back.*

Miss H. Mrs. Langford!

Mrs. L. I really beg pardon, but we expect news from our daughter; and—

Miss H. ~~*Mrs. L.*~~ And is news from your daughter to set aside all respect? [*sits down*] But I suppose I must overlook it. And pray what's she doing? Is she a companion at present, or merely a governess?

Mrs. L. She's neither, Miss Hornet; she's the friend of her protector.

Miss H. Oh, of course, she's a friend, as she lives under her roof.

Vox. Well, and she deserves to be, with her mind and manners.

Miss H. Ah! bless my soul, is that you, Mr. Vox?

Vox. Yes, ma'am, it is.

Miss H. Well, really, you must excuse me; I confess I didn't see you.

Vox. Oh, I knew that. I was aware I wasn't wanted!

Miss H. Wanted, sir! wanted!

Vox. A friend, like a pin, is never seen when he's done with.

Miss H. Because, sir, such friends are not worth picking up. Well, Mrs. Langford, of course you've heard the news? You know who's bought the mines?

Mrs. L. The mines—oh, yes, ma'am; it's a Mr. Trevanion.

Miss H. Exactly.

Mrs. L. Of Cornwall, they say; and of very good family.

Miss H. Good, madam! the best; one he can trace up to the times of the Britons!

Vox. [*aside*] Honourable, really; men with moons on their bodies.

Mrs. L. And more than all this, who, we're also informed—

Miss H. Is a great friend of ours!

Mrs. L. Of yours, ma'am?

Miss H. Of ours. You're aware that my cousin is appointed engineer?

Mrs. L. He is, ma'am?

Miss H. He is; and I may now make it known that Mr. Trevanion, when he comes here, will reside at our house.

Mrs. L. [*aside*] Why, here's a piece of news!

Vox. [*aside*] And so now all's explained. She hopes to catch this fellow.

Miss H. We've just heard from him, in fact, to settle the time; for at present I must tell you he's travelling in Switzerland, where it seems he's been detained by an old friend of his—a lady named Lorimer.

Mrs. L. Lorimer?

Miss H. Yes.

Mrs. L. [*aside*] Why, can it be the same?

Miss H. So of course I'm most anxious that this tour should prove of service; and perhaps upon that point Mr. Vox can inform me. Can you tell me, Mr. Vox, what are the climate's peculiarities?

Vox. Yes, madam. One—if he drinks the snow-water, he may have a lump under his throat; what they call a *gôitre.*

Miss H. A *gôitre*!

Vox. Yes, madam; as big as a water melon!

Miss H. Well, really, sir, your abruptness is a something inhuman.

Vox. Is it, indeed, ma'am? I'm not so kind as your friend, then; who, as he's coming to *your* house, can bear any infliction.

Miss H. Well, perhaps, sir, he can; he may even be induced to read one of your letters.

Vox. Which you have read, madam, without any inducement; but that was at a time when you could reverence mind—mind, the great potentate that now rules the world.

Miss H. And havn't I honoured the potentate when I noticed its livery? What but my dinners, sir, gave you inspiration? What was your Helicon but my soup-tureen?

Vox. Well, and what, in return, was your Lethe?—My inkstand. When excluded from certain circles, didn't I soothe your pangs by attacking at large the prodigality of fashion?—and when not asked to dance on account of your age, didn't I denounce the system which hurries girls into women?

Miss H. Silence, sir; silence! Mrs. Langford, can you allow me to be talked to in this manner?

Mrs. L. Well, really, Miss Hornet, I don't know, I'm sure; but—

[LANGFORD *is heard outside.*

Lan. Lizzy! Lizzy! [*He enters at the back, waving a letter.*

Mrs. L. Ah! my husband!

Lan. Didn't I tell you—it's here, love—it's here; and from Paris!

Miss H. Oh, from your daughter? Well, I trust there's good news.

Lan. Thank you, ma'am; thank you. I trust so myself.

Vox. And as a proof of my feelings I shall leave you to read it.

Miss. H. And so you'd set me an example on the point of good manners? Well, sir, I shall follow you as far as the street.

Vox. I don't care so long as you don't overtake me at the church.

[*He goes out at the back.*

Miss H. So good day, Mr. Langford; I really hope you've good news; and whether your daughter be companion or governess, believe me, I trust she has a good situation.

[*She goes out at the back.* LANGFORD *during this has opened the letter, and now stands surveying it.*

Lan. No; I can't read it; there's a cloud in my eyes that wont turn to rain. Lizzy, do you read it—do you, love; and then I shall fancy I hear her voice as well as your own.

[*She takes the letter; and, as he sinks into a chair holding her the scene closes in.*

SCENE II.—CORRIDOR IN AN HOTEL IN PARIS.

[*French servants cross with luggage,* WILLIAMS *follows.*

Wil. So, another arrival—these Paris hotels are just like our coaches; crowd 'em as you please and they've always got room. Well, it's time for our ladies to be in from their walk, and for my part I think to go back to England, for I'm tired of the French, always saying so much that they never intend; and then, too, pretending there's no one else who can dress,—that we buy their shawls, and yet can't put them on!

[AUGUSTE *crosses with cloaks.*

Aug. Bon jour, mademoiselle.

Wil. Good day, Mr. Auguste; another arrival?

Aug. Oh, yase—zere's anozere.

Wil. A countess, I hear. Well, I hope she's something grander than the last one I saw, a little wizen woman I mistook for a servant.

Aug. Ah, but she was noble—great blood in her vein.

Wil. Well, I did'nt think she'd any.

Aug. Vere different from Ainglant, where you've ver pretty women, but zen you've no lady.

Wil. What! we've no ladies?

Aug. Bièn joliè, ma chère, très agrèable—mais.

Wil. Well, that's a good joke. What do you call Mrs. Lorimer? Isn't Miss Langford a lady?

Aug. Oh, vere pretty gal, vere pretty bote—

Wil. And you mean then to say, sir, that?—

Aug. It is not your fault; ze grande mannere, like aloes, take long time to grow. Want ze ancienne noblesse; now in Ainglant, you know, you were all born yesterday.

Wil. Were we indeed? Then we're pretty big babies. Why Miss Langford comes of a family as old as any alive.

Aug. Oh! mademoiselle.

Wil. I say, sir, she does. She's a niece of Lady Evesham—Lady Evesham who brought her over here for her health, and the Eveshams are related to our highest nobility.

Aug. Nobility—oh!

Wil. Miss Langford's relations have titles among them—and as good, I'm quite sure, as ever come to this house—and I should not at all wonder if she got one herself; that some time or other she'd come in for something.

Aug. Sans doute, mademoiselle. She will come in for her dinnere. There is Miss Langford, so if you please I will go to my beesness.

[*He goes off.*

MARGARET *enters with a book.*

Mar. Why, Williams, I trust that you were not quarrelling?

Wil. Oh no, miss, not at all; only really these Frenchmen do try one's temper so. What do you think he said, miss? That we'd no ladies in England!

Mar. What a cruel aspersion.

Wil. He actually did—that we hadn't one old family—he had even the impudence to sneer, miss, at yours.

Mar. At mine! do you say?

Wil. At yours, miss; to doubt yours was such. But that was a point I very soon settled. I told him 'twould be difficult to match it in France.

Mar. Williams!

Wil. Oh, I did. I said he'd be proud if he could get any such visitors.

Mar. You were very kind, really; but—

Wil. And what's more than that, I took leave to say that—

Mar. Oh, thank you; thank you. Will you place this on my table?

Wil. [*taking the book.*] Certainly, miss. [*Aside.*] No lady, indeed!

[*She goes off.*

Mar. How confirmed is this belief; every day it's now revealed to me—on every lip I meet it! That I, who shared my guardian's love, shared also her position; and yet with all its flattery is it an error that should gratify me?—is it not one I should remove?—this false respect, this dignity which but degrades when undeserved? And yet how remove what is now become so rooted, what another has occasioned; for was it my own wish at the first?—was it not the act of my benefactress, when she raised me to her level, and felt it was expedient to keep my birth a secret, as a means of ensuring both my peace and her own?—she, who knew the world she mingled with, its envy and unkindness, and what would be its comment on the daughter of a labouring man transferred to the sphere of opulence and station.

MRS. LORIMER *enters.*

Mrs. Lor. Well, Margaret, here's news for you. Who do you think has arrived?

Mar. Arrived!

Mrs. Lor. Who, of all men, but Trevanion.

Mar. Indeed!

Mrs. Lor. I've learnt it but this moment. This is his leaving us to return home by the Rhine! But how like the man—restless as a child from too great a sense of happiness.

Mar. Or should you not say of duty? This is his shortest route to England, where his affairs are most important.

Mrs. Lor. And how they also display him—this generous dreamer, who measures all hearts by his own, who retains the boy's romance amidst the realities of manhood.

[TREVANION *is heard outside.*

Trev. Very well, I'll introduce myself.

Mrs. Lor. So he's flying up stairs with his usual impetuosity.

Mar. Then I'll leave you, if you'll allow me, and—

Mrs. Lor. Leave me—

Mar. As we've had so long a walk; and I must say that my toilette—

Mrs. Lor. Well, as you please, love; though, for my part, I think I never saw you look better.

Mar. Oh, when in your eyes did I ever want attraction?

[*She goes off.*

Enter TREVANION.

Trev. Well, confess, now I've surprised you.

Mrs. Lor. Surprised me, Trevanion, who have known you from childhood!

Trev. What! another admonition—and the moment we meet?

Mrs. Lor. And is it strange, when every hour brings a new apprehension?

Trev. Nay, nay.

Mrs. Lor. Why, think what you told me of this scheme you've embarked in—this mining affair—a speculation so hazardous; and to accomplish what ends?—to bestow on your dependents an impossible good, to create an ideal world for them such as earth has never seen.

Trev. And is the childhood of earth to be a law to its age? Must schemes be held visionary because they're unselfish? Mine I feel will succeed. But if it should fail, and I lose a few thousands? Need I say how long I have felt that he who lives only for himself has not yet learned to live?

Mrs. Lor. Well of course, so resolved, it is vain to oppose you; so now will you tell me why you altered your route?

Trev. A mystery, is it not?

Mrs. Lor. Well, perhaps not in one who has a woman's caprice.

Trev. And has woman nothing more with which he can sympathise?

Mrs. Lor. Why you surely wouldn't tell me that?—

Trev. Yes, my friend, yes.

Mrs. Lor. In love! and with whom?

Trev. And you cannot conceive?

Mrs. Lor. Why, knowing what you demand, which is merely perfection—

Trev. Well, and if I have found it?

Mrs. Lor. Ah, my dear friend—

Trev. Is it for you to deny it, who have lived in its presence, in her's from whom the noblest would gather completeness, strength from her gentleness, truth from her purity, from her love all the joy that could be held without madness?

Mrs. Lor. Margaret?

Trev. Herself!

Mrs. Lor. You surprise me, indeed.

Trev. And why so? Is she less than my poor words have described her?

Mrs. Lor. Oh, not so; and—

Trev. Or did I need years to sound the rich depths of her soul? Were not the few weeks I've known her a lifetime in spirit? To meet as we did, and in a scene so entrancing! Oh, happy hours! brief only in joy; those morning walks, those evening communings when the heart opened as the day declined, when the giant peaks shut the world out from our gaze, and left it nothing but heaven.

Mrs. Lor. And yet pause, Trevanion, pause. Are you assured this is no delusion? Strong as this feeling seems to you, can you vouch for its endurance? For think what it involves; the peace of one so cherished, one that you know is bound to me by the sacredest of ties, not only by her excellence, her youth, her isolation, but by the memory of my child—that child she has replaced, whose love she has restored to me, whose future she must realise.

Trev. And you would quench my ardour by these added recollections?

Mrs. Lor. No; I would test it by a knowledge of her claims, not only on myself, but those even of her family.

Trev. Well, and of her family! you tell me it is honourable.

Mrs. Lor. Highly, I believe.

Trev. That she was a relation of Lady Evesham, whom she accompanied abroad.

Mrs. Lor. So I was told by her friend in Germany, under whose roof Lady Evesham died, Margaret on that point having ever been reserved, owing as I heard further to her parents being reduced.

Trev. Well, and were her origin as humble as her fortunes, should I think her the less precious? Were her parentage obscure, should I the less treasure herself? So now you know my heart, you will go to her, my friend, and prepare her for an interview.

Mrs. Lor. What, this evening?

Trev. This evening. Ah, if I seem impatient, have not your own words fanned my ardour?

Mrs. Lor. And yet again let me ask, is this no dream of imagination? have you reflected on your position, your necessities, your station?

Trev. Her love would secure all. To grow worthier of her is the pledge of my ambition; to share with her my success is my motive to obtain it; to divide with her my misfortunes—ah, there could be none if she partook them. [*They go off.*

SCENE III.—SALOON IN THE HOTEL.

Elegantly furnished. An easel, with drawing; a table in centre, with books; door.

MARGARET *is discovered at the easel.*

Mar. No, I cannot finish it. Every morning I attempt it with the same result—every day my hand seems feebler. Why is this? I am well—I am happy—blessed with the best of friends, possessed of all the enjoyments that I yearned for from my childhood. Books, music, pictures—you are all beside me still. Why is it your voices are not as sweet as they were once? Why have they ceased to satisfy? Is it because they have been echoed by a human tone that made them deeper, clearer, more harmonious—a mind that gave new meaning to familiar things, new spirit to old forms—that taught me the beautiful was no bright vision, but a reality ever mated with the good.

Mrs. LORIMER *comes from the door.*

Mrs. Lor. Well, Margaret, he will pay his respects presently; and really, considering we required a cavalier, I think his arrival fortunate. However, before he comes, I have a word or two to say to you about a paper I am sending to England respecting the little property which—

Mar. Which, again and again, I must protest against receiving. Is it not enough I have your love, am blessed with all the luxuries your fortune can bestow on me, but that meanly I must accept a bounty which I feel is undeserved?

Mrs. Lor. Margaret, do you compel me to revive this old discussion? What was I when I met you?—a being wholly desolate, bereft of her best treasure, when that treasure you replaced, and filled up in my heart the dreary void that had been left there.

Mar. But was it not a happiness?—and now must I accept what would degrade it to a task?

Mrs. Lor. Oh! not so—not so. I offer it as no return—I would wish you to accept it but as a poor proof of affection; and though I know you must be sensitive—though I see how much you are bound to consult the feelings of your family—

Mar. My family?

Mrs. Lor. Regarding whom, as you're aware, I've always respected your reserve, convinced that, could you have spoken, you would have done so unsolicited.

Mar. Be assured of it.

Mrs. Lor. Yet still I cannot think they would object to what I wish, even after all I heard from your devoted friend, the baroness.

Mar. The baroness; and what said she, madam?

Mrs. Lor. Why, what every one inferred—that you were a relation of Lady Evesham.

Mar. [*aside.*] What is this?

Mrs. Lor. Or at least of her late husband; and as the fact has been mentioned in your presence, and you did not disavow it—

Mar. I did not!

Mrs. Lor. Of course it was confirmed. But we'll speak of this no longer, as I see how much it pains you. I must now conclude my letter, or I shall be too late for the post; and this point of its contents we will discuss some other time. [*She goes off.*

Mar. What is it I've listened to? All had been forgotten, but now it flashes back in characters of fire. I remember the occasion. At a party, 'mid some strangers, Lady Evesham's name was mentioned, and some one said, carelessly, he believed I was her relative. Elated by the attentions I had received that evening, and fearing that a denial might lead to some

inquiry, I did not deny it. I assented to it by my silence, and now it is believed, and the admission rises up in judgment against my honour. I have approved a falsehood, and, should it be discovered, I stand detected as an impostor, whose vanity would justify the worst sneers that she has shrunk from. Oh! folly—madness! Why did I let it pass?—why want the courage to crush it at once? But it shall last no longer; I will go to Mrs. Lorimer, and tell her all.

[*Turning to her easel, to put down her pencil.*

TREVANION *comes from the door.*

Trev. Miss Langford—

[*She turns, and with an effort composes herself.*

Mar. Mr. Trevanion.

Trev. A late hour for intrusion, but your kindness has given me the privilege of a friend.

Mar. Or should you not say you have claims which?—

Trev. Are only valued when you admit them. [*they sink into chairs*] Well, I find you surrounded by all your old acquaintances, your books and sketches—a view, I think, in Switzerland. May I say there are but few, who in the vivid life of Paris, would recur for their enjoyment to these recollections of nature?

Mar. They are very dear to me, for now I have only recollections; but how is it that Paris has allured you from nature's presence?

Trev. Because its enjoyment requires companionship, because the heart that's filled with beauty ever yearns to have it shared; and mine, not for a day, or a brief excursion in a lovely region, but through all varieties of fortune, through the pilgrimage of life—

Mar. Of life?

Trev. Even so—can you wonder I would escape that loneliness from which so many have fled before me?

Mar. And yet some would tell us that life grows tame when it becomes domestic—that isolation is man's only freedom.

Trev. But is there not a bondage that is truest freedom, where allegiance becomes happiness, and gain consists in sacrifice, where we grow richer by what we give, and our own joy comes back to us from another's eyes?

Mar. There—there—may be—

[*She takes up a pencil, and pretends to sketch.*

Trev. Is it strange, then, I should seek for her who is the life of this ideal—for her whose love, while it became the goal and beacon of my journeying, would make the holiness of my bliss the pledge of its duration?

Mar. And—and—were trials to assail you, and your journey to become bleak?

Trev. Nay, there would be beauty on the very sands of life if they bore her footsteps; each change would be welcome that more revealed her worth; each sorrow precious that gave proof of her devotion; my roof might be humble, but she would be beneath it; the world might cast me off, but I should find one in my home! [MAR. *sinks back in a reverie.*] Such is my sketch of a companion—tell me, do you like it?

Mar. Yes, were it of earth.

Trev. It is of earth; it lives and walks in our daily pathway, human joy smiles in its eyes, human tears can dim them; it has a spirit that glides into the breast of its worshipper, but a form, too, that he can fold in his embrace—Margaret, need I say it, it is yourself whom I have painted!

Mar. Myself? [*They both rise.*

Trev. Oh! pardon my abruptness; pardon the feeling which overflows in words, but no words can express. I met you, Margaret, and a new life possessed me; your warmth, your brightness drew my spirit upwards; all that was good in me you fostered, all that was faint in me you

strengthened; I saw in you the substance of my hopes, and found it brighter than my visions!

Mar. This—this—disclosure was so unlooked for—

Trev. Speak to me—say at least I've not displeased you—that you're not offended by my rashness—

Mar. Offended?—

Trev. That I may dare to hope—that you will plead for me with your parents.

Mar. My parents?

Trev. For know I have learnt all—your reverses, your endurance, your relationship to her who brought you to this country—

Mar. [*aside*] Lady Evesham!

Trev. And, believe me, if I value the name and wealth I have inherited, it is that they may be the means of doing justice to your worth.

Mar. [*aside*] And he, too, is deceived!

Trev. But you are very pale and trembling—I see I have been too abrupt with you—oh! pardon me, I will leave you to-night, at least I will live in hope, and whatever be my fate, be assured it is my prayer that yours may ever be such happiness as you only can bestow on me.

[*He goes out.*

Mar. He loves me, then!—he loves me! How my heart leaped at the sound—a life was in that throb; but then how great the chill, how the transport changed to terror. He came in trust to claim the woman that he trusted!—he believes in this delusion; this falsehood I have confirmed. And now can I withhold confession, when thus doubly I am urged to it? Confession, which is the sole atonement I can make, and make with what result—that of sympathy—forgiveness? Am I sure I should obtain that? that he would believe this false step had its excuses at the moment—was forgotten as soon as taken? Ah! if he should doubt this—if his trust in me should have a shock which no affection could recover—if loving as he does the truth he seeks in her he loves, one who would defend the truth as boldly as himself—why, then, I sink, indeed—he blots me from his memory—he drives me from his heart!—I, who if banished thence, would find the universe an exile; and yet to conceal—oh! fearful utterance!—to conceal—

Enter MRS. LORIMER.

Mrs. Lor. Well, Margaret! he has seen you, told you of his devotion, placed in your hands the hopes of his life?

Mar. Spare me, madam—

Mrs. Lor. Spare you, Margaret? I know that under such circumstances you have a privilege to be reserved; but not to a friend who feels for you as a mother—you have nothing to hide from me.

Mar. [*aside*] Nothing to hide!

Mrs. Lor. [*gaily*] Well, I forgive you. Come with me to my room. I do but ask in return for my love the right to partake your happiness.

[*Leading her off.*

Mar. [*aside*] My happiness! [*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE I.—WORK-YARD OF LANGFORD.

The Bristol Channel at the back. The hull of a fishing-boat and sheds; the house opposite, porch, and windows covered with jasmine. Gateway leading to the town.

[*Workmen are discovered employed upon the boat,* LANGFORD *giving directions.*

Lan. Now, move about, men, move about—we've a good deal to do; there's her fore-mast to be fitted, and—

Adams. [*advancing.*] But I thought, sir, you said we were to finish her deck?

Lan. Quite right—quite right. What a head I have got!

Adams. And are the two berths enough, sir, or are we to go on to—

Lan. [*musing.*] The 24th.

Adams. The 24th, sir?

Lan. Yes, that's the day—the time she was to reach England—the time that she said we might—— Ah! wandering again. Go and do as you like; you see how I'm bewildered—and have I no cause? To think she'll be back again, soon to be with us! She and her husband—her husband, how oddly that sounds! Married—yes, married—and yet still our own.

SKILLET *comes through the gate.*

Skil. Good day, Mr. Langford. I suppose you've heard the news, that Mr. Trevanion's returned?

Lan. Returned!

Skil. Yes, sir, reached London yesterday. The steward's had a letter, and is gone off to meet him.

Lan. He has?

Skil. And what's more, do you know, Mr. T. has brought home a wife with him?

Lan. Ha, ha! a wife, eh?

Skil. Yes, some lady, it seems, that he met with abroad.

Lan. And you don't know the lady?

Skil. Oh, not at all—but it seems as if you did.

Lan. I did!—ha, ha!

Skil. Well, and who is she?

Lan. Who is she?—ha, ha! Why, Lizzy, Lizzy!

[*The men cease their work, and look round.*

Enter MRS. LANGFORD *from the house.*

Mrs. L. Yes, Michael.

Lan. She's come, love—she's come. The steward's got a letter, and gone off to meet 'em. There's tidings—there's joy! Ah! my heart said as much; no wonder I hadn't a thought for my work. Well, no more after this—it's all over now. You may go, men, to-day.

1*st Workm.* Go, sir?

Lan. Yes, go. Mr. Trevanion's returned—isn't that news? Go and drink his health—and Mrs. Trevanion's, drink hers in the bargain; you'll soon know the reason. Go over to the inn, and make yourselves happy;—ay, if you're able, as happy as I am.

Workm. Very well, sir.

[*They go off by the gate.*

Skil. [*aside.*] Exceedingly odd, this. Mr. Langford, I called just to say a few words—

Lan. Not now, friend—not now. You see what a way I'm in. Come again in half an hour, and say what you like.

Skil. Very well, sir, I will. [*aside.*] Why, what's all this mystery?

[*He goes out by the gate.*

Mrs. L. Well, Michael, well—and so to-morrow we may hear from her?

Lan. To-morrow—to-morrow.

Mrs. L. Or at most the day after; though time will hang heavy if we wait but twelve hours.

Lan. But why must we wait?—why shouldn't we go to her?

Mrs. L. Go to her!

Lan. Go to her.

Mrs. L. Without being invited?

Lan. But do parents need that—even if their daughter has married above them?

Mrs. L. But her husband's a stranger; you've never even seen him.

Lan. Then the greater, I should hope, would be his satisfaction—— No, I'm convinced of it. This isn't a time to stand niggling about ceremony—we ought to go, Lizzy.

Mrs. L. Well, but both of us couldn't. Some one, you know, must look after the men.

Lan. Oh, true—I forgot that.

Mrs. L. Well, you shall go, Michael, and 'twill be enough for me to know that you're by the side of my child.

Lan. Ah, bless you, love—bless you. Always willing to sacrifice your pleasure for mine.

Mrs. L. And as luckily, Michael, we have the railway at hand.

Lan. I can be in town in five hours—thank Heaven for that. In the old time, you know, 'twould have taken fourteen,—so, if you say so, its settled; you'll pack up my things, and I'll run to the stable and order a chaise.

Mrs. L. Very good, very good—you shall have all directly.

[*She enters the house.*

Lan. [*looking at his watch.*] Yes, now just eleven—I can save the twelve o'clock train—that will do famously. [*looking off*] Eh, there's my foreman, Adams. Step over to the stables, will you, and tell 'em to send a chaise here—send it directly. That's done: and now, only to think that I shall hold her in my arms before the day's over—hold her fast to my heart after five years' long absence, and see in the woman all the look of the child!

Enter MISS HORNET *through the gate.*

Miss H. Good day, Mr. Langford. I thought I'd step in, as it occurs to me that perhaps I may be able to serve you. You're aware that Mr. Trevanion is expected here shortly?

Lan. Yes, ma'am, I am.

Miss H. And you may also have heard, to reside at our house?

Lan. At your house?

Miss H. At ours; and as I believe it's very possible he may set up a yacht, should the lady of that house express a taste for the water, why——

Lan. You'd give me the job. Well, thank you, ma'am, really; there's only this hindrance, suppose another lady should fancy the land?

Miss H. Another lady?

Lan. And instead of a yacht want to set up a carriage?

Miss H. What is it you mean, sir?

Lan. Mean, why—ha! ha!——

Miss H. Will you be good enough to speak?

Lan. Why, of course, if I must—why——

[ADAMS *looks in at the gate.*

Adams. You shall have the chaise directly, sir.

Lan. Thank you, Adams—thank you.

Adams. And the men, as you wish, are drinking the health of Mrs. Trevanion.

[*A loud shout is heard outside;* ADAMS *disappears.*

Miss H. Mrs. Trevanion?

Lan. Yes, ma'am, it's out.

Miss H. And—and—do you mean to say he's married?

Lan. As fast, I believe, as ever iron locked timber.

Miss H. Why, I shall fall to the ground!

Lan. I thought 'twould surprise you.

Miss H. And—and—who is the person?

Lan. Who is she?—ha! ha!—why——

Miss H. Speak, sir; I desire you.

Lan. Ah! I don't want entreaty.

Miss H. Speak, sir at once, then.

Lan. At once, then, to please you, his wife is my daughter.

Miss H. Your daughter?

Lan. My daughter?—Ah! I see, like myself, that you're speechless with pleasure.

Miss H. Well, if I could feel annoyed at his conduct, his marrying your daughter removes all disturbance.

Lan. Well, I'm glad to hear that.

Miss H. A partner so wholly unfit for him as she is precludes the necessity of one harsh expression. Ha! ha! And so he has married your Margaret; how very like the man—the easy, credulous creature, who acts only on impulse—the grown child, who is ever in want of his toy, which he takes up one minute to throw by the next.

Lan. Throw by, ma'am—throw by!—And do you mean, then, to say that?——

[MRS. LANGFORD *looks from the house.*

Mrs. L. Now, Michael, all's ready, and you've no time to spare.

Lan. Quite right, love—quite right; so good-bye, Miss Hornet. I'm going to my daughter, and I'll take her your compliments.

[*He enters the house with* MRS. LANGFORD.

Miss H. Married, and to that girl—one I've always detested—detested for her pride and her trumpery talents. Married after all I've been led to expect—his arrangement to come to us—to stay a whole month—a month during which I should have had a companion, and he an adviser—the friend he requires—a friend that he might have found needful for life.

[VOX *comes from the gate, and pauses.*

Vox. (*aside*) Oh! she here!

Miss H. And now all to prove but a dream and a bubble.

Vox. (*aside*) That Gorgon, with but one human look—her annuity.

Miss H. And to think what it's cost me!—such a being as Vox—a man of such talent—such feeling—such mind.

[VOX *advances and calls at the door.*

Vox. Mr. Langford at home?

Miss H. Ah! good morning, Mr. Vox.

Vox. Good morning, Miss Hornet.

Miss H. I have not had the pleasure of seeing you lately.

Vox. The pleasure, indeed!

Miss H. And can it be doubted?

Vox. Why, I'm really indifferent; for I now begin to question whether

the power of a man of letters isn't a good deal impaired by being much among women.

Miss H. Cruel misapprehension!

Vox. Oh! yes, ma'am, I do, though I am an impostor, and your friend at the mines the only man worth respecting.

Miss H. I said no such thing, sir; and I think no such thing; if any one's censurable, it's Mr. Trevanion.

Vox. What do you say?

Miss H. A person whose character I can at last apprehend.

Vox. [*aside.*] Here's a change.

Miss H. A man who's devoid of either honour or gratitude, and who, if but for one thing, I'm bound to detest,—the wrong he has made me do to the claims of old friends.

Vox. Well, really, Miss Hornet, if that is your feeling—

Miss H. And you now see the pain, the compunction it gives me.

Vox. Why, I think our best course is to forget all the past.

Miss H. Exactly, exactly, forget all the past.

Vox. [*aside.*] And let me take care I'm not deceived for the future.

Miss H. And now, Mr. Vox, give your candid opinion; don't you think that this person's a monstrous pretender—this pseudo-philanthropist, who dabbles in mines, and talks of raising his species whilst he sinks them in darkness?

Vox. But that's not the worst, ma'am; who subjects them to beggary—for what was his scheme—that village of theirs—where misery and want would be as scarce as bad grammar, where every one was to know everything, to have all he wished, and to work when it pleased him?

Miss H. Exactly, exactly.

Vox. Well, and what's the result?—why, that the steward this morning has turned half of 'em off.

Miss H. Turned half of 'em off!

Vox. On the pitiful plea that his master will be ruined.

Miss H. What monstrous injustice!

Vox. Did you ever know its parallel?

Miss H. But you intend to expose him?

Vox. Expose him!

Miss H. In your paper.

Vox. Well, I ought.

Miss H. Ought, sir! You must; I feel as if *I* could draw up the impeachment.

Vox. What, in our paper?

Miss H. Even I; for what may not woman do under an honourable inspiration?

Vox. [*aside.*] Well I wonder if she's able?

Miss H. Ah, Mr. Vox, were I allowed but to attempt it.

Vox. [*aside.*] Skillet's my drudge; but if she'd fill his place, why—

Miss H. Speak, then, oh! speak; is such a wish possible?

Vox. Possible! can you ask? Is it for me to put a check to the development of mind!

Miss H. You consent, then, consent?—you actually say that?—

[LANGFORD *is heard inside.*

Lan. Adams! the chaise ready? So am I. And now good-bye, Lizzy; bless you, bless you.

Miss H. But you see we're interrupted; so, if 'tis agreed, let me go home at once and discharge this great duty.

Vox. Well, of course, if you wish it.

Miss H. Then come, Mr. Vox, give me your arm to my door; let me show you I'm equal to what I've desired; let me prove to you I've the power to unmask an impostor, and attach him to the gibbet of public derision. Come, Mr. Vox, come. [*They go out through the gate.*

SCENE II.—AN APARTMENT AT TREVANION'S HOUSE.

Enter ROBERTS, *followed by* MRS. LORIMER.

Rob. If you'll wait here a moment, madam, I'll announce you to my mistress. [*He goes off.*

Mrs. Lor. And now for an interview which I almost tremble at while seeking, which must explain to me this mystery, this sadness about Margaret. Every day since we left Paris she has shown a strange depression, which her efforts to throw off have only made more manifest; I am convinced there is a cause for it, which ought to be divulged; some reason that, like a poison, strikes the deeper for concealment; once or twice it has occurred to me that it had reference to her family, that subject upon which she was always so reserved; but whatever be the cause I see her happiness at stake, and must claim a friend's authority to secure it for the future.

Enter MARGARET.

Mar. My dearest friend—

Mrs. Lor. Well, love, and how are you to day? Better, I trust. Come, come, really yesterday's dejection was a libel upon matrimony.

Mar. Oh no, my friend, not so.

Mrs. Lor. Are you another victim to the moroseness of our climate, or did you leave your old gaiety with your old name in Paris?

Mar. It is not so, indeed; though really if it were, could I need a sense of cheerfulness whilst you were by my side?

Mrs. Lor. Well, of course that's very flattering, but still I'd much rather you'd depend on yourself; believe me no one yet was ever happy by proxy.

Enter TREVANION.

Trev. I heard your voice, our best of friends, and to-day you're doubly welcome, for here's Margaret so low-spirited.

Mar. [*to* MRS. LOR.] Nay, nay; haven't I proved to you that?—

Mrs. Lor. Oh, no; you mustn't ask my evidence.

Trev. And really it annoys me, because I think the cause so insufficient. She has not heard yet from her father.

Mrs. Lor. Indeed!

Trev. And though I admit the delay is strange, as he was written to a month since, yet as letters will miscarry, and a thousand things arise to retard the gravest duties, why—

Mrs. Lor. Why, of course they might in this case.

Trev. And yet, you see, she's giving way to all kinds of apprehensions.

Mar. [*aside.*] And again he is deceived!

Mrs. Lor. Well, then, really, she deserves a scolding, unless she has reasons for her fears which she is reluctant to divulge; so, do you know I've a great mind to exact from her a confession?

Mar. My friend!

Mrs. Lor. Oh, yes, I have, and perhaps impose a penance.

Trev. Well, I invest you with all authority; so if you'll go with her up stairs whilst I dismiss my steward, I'll follow you directly.

Mrs. Lor. Then come, Margaret; you see my power is absolute, and I shall allow of no rebellion.

Mar. Oh! do not fear. I—[*aside*] The hour—is it come?

[*They go off.*

Enter KNIGHTLY.

Trev. And now, Knightly, let me repeat to you what pain this news has given me. What was it I proposed?—A scheme in which industry was to obtain its just position; when, at the moment it was developing, you suddenly suspend it by discharging half of those I had pledged myself to benefit.

Knight. And had I no excuse, sir? We had tried the mines for months—tried them at an outlay which, if continued, must have ruined you; and was I not entitled to act at least on my own discretion, and step in as I did to limit the losses of this project?

Trev. But this is not sufficient; you would have me now abandon it.

Knight. I confess it.

Trev. And employ my remaining fortune in some other channel?

Knight. I would, sir; for your estate being mortgaged, need I say that what you've left is but a small sum to support you?

Trev. Perhaps so, but the content are never poor; and you forget that I have now one who satisfies all yearnings.

Knight. Very true, sir.

Trev. One who, if all were lost, would still leave me more than affluent.

Knight. Then you will continue this experiment?

Trev. Clearly, for a time; whatever the result, it demands a further trial.

Knight. But should that second effort fail?

Trev. Then I will leave all to your discretion.

Knight. And allow me to employ your funds in the manner I see best?

Trev. All—all. I ask you but at present to remember what is pledged—my honour, my good word. Secure these, and take your course. So now return with a lightened heart whilst I speak to my surveyor; another time you shall see my wife, and judge the basis of my happiness—her affection, her sincerity. Ah, Knightly! could I paint her to you as I would, you would not wear this heavy brow, or talk to me of losses. You would say I was a man who had no further claim on fortune.

[*They go off.*

Scene III.—DRAWING-ROOM AT TREVANION'S.

Margaret *discovered seated on a settee, her face buried in her hands;* Mrs. Lorimer *seated opposite.*

Mrs. Lor. What a history have I listened to!

Mar. [*rising slowly.*] Of meanness, of deceit, of a falsehood that has well merited all the punishment that followed it.

Mrs. Lor. My poor child!

Mar. Ah! now that you know all, do you not despise me?

Mrs. Lor. Despise you, who in your suffering show so deep a sense of goodness? Oh, Margaret! why did you not confide in me? Had you trusted in me only, all this pain might have been avoided.

Mar. It might have been. Keenly I feel now the madness of my course; but, alas! all were kind to me—all flattered and increased in me the love of that new sphere for which my sympathies were moulded—all tended to unnerve me. When that temptation came before me which at once I should have confronted, I feared to hazard my position by an honest disavowal; and in shrinking from unjust scorn I became deservedly contemptible.

Mrs. Lor. Yet all this might have been excused had you but been candid with your husband.

Mar. All—all! However false to others, I was pledged to truth with him—doubly pledged with one whose whole being was sincerity; but he shared in this delusion. He knew I had confirmed it—and, oh! if I had been weak enough to fear unworthy sneers—had I the courage to encounter the contempt of him I loved? Still it was my duty—I saw it—I resolved on it. I said, "Before our marriage I will tell him all—I will unfold it to him gradually, convince him of my affection, and throw myself upon his own for pity and forgiveness."

Mrs. Lor. Fatal compromise!

Mar. It was so; my love for him grew to worship. More and more

did I wake to the excellence of his nature; but hourly, whilst his virtues urged me to confession, they appalled me with its disgrace. More than ever from myself I shrunk; my treachery gnawed me; but to unmask it—to blind him with that sight—how maddening was the struggle! [*pausing*] Thus days flew by—I resolved and I delayed—a few only were left—and still I hesitated. Your illness came to hurry on our marriage; hours only were remaining; 'twas our marriage-day; I was a coward, and betrayed him!

Mrs. Lor. And to this moment he knows nothing; for your father's letter, which would have explained all, has never been received.

Mar. [*pausing*] It *was* received.

Mrs. Lor. It was?

Mar. But too late to break the truth; we were already married.

Mrs. Lor. Margaret, I will not disguise from you what pain you have inflicted. How unlooked for was this shock; how deeply it has wrung me; but though you have erred, you have suffered; and whatever be your future, be assured you have still a friend.

Mar. Oh, bless you; bless you;—but is it possible I can repair the past?

Mrs. Lor. You can; for repentance, remember, if too late for happiness, is always in time for duty. There's but one thing to be done—seek your husband instantly; and at once confess your error.

Mar. And yet?—

Mrs. Lor. Is it better you should do so—or he detect it? I hear his step!

Mar. Ah! what am I to do?

Mrs. Lor. Your duty, Margaret; your duty.

[TREVANION *is heard outside.*

Trev. Well, Knightly, I can wait no longer; tell me when he comes.

[*He enters.*

Plague take these men of business, who pretend to value time, and yet waste half an hour as if moments were worth no more than the sands that tell them. Margaret, love only knows that those sands are golden!

Mrs. Lor. Well, and now Trevanion—

Trev. Your discovery?

Mrs. Lor. You must learn that from herself—so good evening, dearest. May I find you better when we meet again.

[*Embracing* MARGARET, *who sinks on a settee. She turns to* TREVANION, *who takes her hand.*

Trev. [*aside*] You wished her better; do you, then, think her ill?

Mrs. Lor. Oh, no—not ill; but so feeble, so depressed, that need I say I must commend her to your most patient tenderness?

[*She goes off.* TREVANION *sinks by* MARGARET'S *side, and draws her to him.*

Trev. Nay, Margaret, you are not unwell; you must rally, love—throw off this cloud—for need I say that I am in its gloom. You will soon hear from your father—perhaps this very night—so be cheerful, I beseech you.

Mar. [*aside*] Cheerful—

Trev. Or is it I misjudge you, that this shade's a proof of light?—that you feel, like me, our joy to be so sudden—so full—so like a transporting dream, that you tremble to awake? Yet why so? Love is the reality—all else a dream.

Mar. [*aside*] Oh, that guilt were one!

Trev. But you do not answer me—still you turn away! Why, Margaret, what is this? Have you a thought I may not share?

Mar. Oh, no, no.

Trev. I—who would put my heart open into your hand—though you should only read its sins!

Mar. [*aside*] It must come now—it must!

Trev. Whatever you may fear, may I not counsel or assist—or if not, share your suffering? Is it not my duty—or let me rather say my joy? So speak to me, Margaret; conceal this from me no longer; let me know at once what preys upon your heart; and—

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Your surveyor is come, sir. [*He goes out again.*

Trev. And at this moment I must go to him. You see, Margaret, how, in the very home of love, the world will thrust itself; but it shall be but for an instant—he shall not detain me long. [*He goes off.*

Mar. Gone—and I have not spoken; gone, when in another instant all might have been told! The dreadful task still undischarged—and growing with each hour into vaster form and darkness. His surveyor, too—most likely from our neighbourhood—where he has heard of our marriage, and now will speak of it! Ah, if it should be so, and he learn the truth from any lips but mine, will they not henceforth be sealed to him for ever? [SERVANT *returns.*

Ser. There is a person below, madam, who wishes to see you.

Mar. To see me?

Ser. Yes, madam.

Mar. And at this hour?—perhaps the applicant who came this morning, and to whom I promised some relief. What kind of person?

Ser. An elderly man, madam.

Mar. What say you?

Ser. And looks like a mechanic.

Mar. Can it be! his—his name?

Ser. I think he said "Langford."

Mar. [*who reels to the table, after a moment's pause feebly articulates*:] You will desire him to step here.

[*She stands tremblingly and silent, rapid steps are heard without, and* LANGFORD, *hurrying in, stretches out his arms,—she falls into them.*]

Lan. Margaret! Margaret! my own best girl, I look on you again; speak to me—speak to me!

Mar. My father!—

Lan. Ah, I was too sudden, you didn't expect to see me nor I you till this morning, till I learnt it all by accident, when I came away at once; I came by rail, forty miles an hour, and I thought we crept.

Mar. [*aside*] My brain—my brain!

Lan. Mother's not with me, for we couldn't both be spared. But you'll go back with me, I hope,—you and your husband?

Mar. Go with you!—why—but you must be tired—take a seat, my father.

Lan. To be sure I will, and by your side, love. Now don't give way; take heart, take heart, or you'll make a child of me. [*He sits with her on the sofa.*] Ah, Margaret! five years since we parted—five long years to us—though they seem now but a day; and yet not a bit changed, still the same simple girl, no finery, no gewgaws—ah, that's right, love, that's right.

Mar. [*aside*] Was not that his step?

Lan. And to think, too, you're married, when it seems but last week that I heard your little feet go pattering about the floor, or saw you sitting to your sampler; that sampler we've kept, Margaret, and look at it often, and—but, my girl, you don't ask after your mother?

Mar. She—she's well?

Lan. Well, and happy; and sends you her blessing.

Mar. I need it!

Lan. Need it?

Mar. [*aside*] He cannot remain much longer!

Lan. Why, my child, what's the matter?

Mar. [*aside*] He said he would return instantly.

Lan. Margaret, you frighten me!

Mar. [*aside*] He will, he will; and I must witness it!

Lan. Speak to me, or I'll call your husband.

Mar. My husband! he is coming—he will find you here—

Lan. Here! why of course he will.

Mar. [*aside*] Oh, if he would but leave me, leave me till I have confessed.

Lan. Here's something wrong. Does he stand on ceremony?

Mar. Oh, no, no, father; pity me, help me!

Lan. Help you, love!—why how?

Mar. You must leave me. Leave me, I implore you?

Lan. [*pausing*] Say that again, Margaret?

Mar. Your presence here may ruin me; I'll send for you another day—to-morrow.

Lan. When your husband's absent, is that it?—no; stop a bit. He loves you, I suppose?

Mar. Loves me!—how unutterably!

Lan. And you him?

Mar. With my whole being.

Lan. You don't fear him, then? So—what's the cause?—I see, I see. Oh, Lizzy, my wife, did I leave your side for this?

Mar. Father!

Lan. Silence; dare you utter the name, and be ashamed of the man? You're afraid he should find me here—come now, the truth.

Mar. I—I confess it.

Lan. Oh, you do; well, I asked you for the truth.

Mar. But if you'll suffer me to explain—

Lan. Explain!—ha! ha!—explain!

Mar. Oh! will you crush me?

Lan. Crush you, madam, crush you; is it for a humble man like me to injure a fine lady, with her grand mansion and proud friends? But I beg your pardon, it's very rude of me to stay after my dismissal; I will obey your orders, I will leave you, madam—I—[*Turning to go, she approaches him.*] Ah! touch me not. Don't you tremble?

[TREVANION *returns.*

Trev. What is this violence? Margaret, who is this?

Lan. A poor ship carpenter, and that lady's father!

Trev. I trust, sir, if your only object here is a jest, you'll quit the room.

Lan. A jest! oh, yes, no doubt, a jest; see how the lady enjoys it.

Trev. Margaret, why do you stand thus rooted?—do not trifle with me. Who are you, sir?

Lan. A presumptuous fellow, sir, who thought he had a claim upon his own flesh and blood—who ventured into the presence of the child that he had dandled on his knee—a mistaken fool, that's all. [*going out*]

Trev. Stay, sir, one moment, a letter was sent to you to acquaint you with our marriage, why was it not answered?

Lan. It *was* answered—

Trev. Margaret—

Mar. [*after an effort*] It was—

Trev. And you withheld it—all breaks upon me now—I stand as at mid-day. Oh, agony!

Lan. Mr. Trevanion—

Trev. [*after a pause*] I feel for you, sir, believe me; but you see your misery's shared—may I beg of you to leave us—

[*Shaking* LANGFORD'S *hand, the latter casts a look on his daughter and totters out.*

Mar. [*after a pause*] Will he never speak? I cannot bear this silence.

Trev. No, no; this is a delusion. I will not believe it.

Mar. Sir. No word—no look?—speak, speak to me, in mercy—
[*She falls on her knees beside him, clasping her hands.*

Trev. Rise—

Mar. The sin was mine, do not despise my father.

Trev. Despise him—that bowed man, who tottered childless from the room—do you think I could despise him?

Mar. Trevanion, hate me not.

Trev. Madam, the heart that overflows with wretchedness has no room for hatred.

Mar. Ah! if you knew how I was tempted to this guilt—how love struggled with conscience—how often I resolved to tell you all—my humble birth—my—

Trev. Stay;
It is your falsehood stabs me, not your birth.
The priceless gem, discovered in the dust,
Gives glory to a crown; the counterfeit,
Though snatched from thence, is worthless!
Pity me——

Mar. Pity yourself!

Trev. That self was blent with yours,
Your honour was its breath, and when that fail'd,
The other perished. [*She rises to her feet.*

Mar. Oh, not perished—drooped.
Say drooped—forget me—cast me off. All suffering
To me were peace that brought back yours again.

Trev. Again? No, Margaret,
The faith that trusts all, stakes all, if betrayed,
Foregoes all. 'Tis the heart of hope which thrills
Always, or, ceasing, never: And with love
Again *is* never!

Mar. This is worse
Than all my terror dreamed!

Trev. Oh, Margaret!
That I should speak thus—and to you!

Mar. Speak on:
My sentence!

Trev. Read it in my agony—
Are we not severed?

Mar. Severed! Parted!

Trev. Parted!
Fear not; the world shall never know the past.
We shall walk hand-in-hand before the crowd;
Your place will still be at my board and hearth;
But—

Mar. Ay, that but—

Trev. What can restore thyself?
Wheel back the fleeted days, those days when bliss
Pour'd through the soul, which, speechless in its praise,
Paid its great debt in tears?—when though the earth
Had yawned, and reeled the roof of heaven, my trust
Had pointed to thy truth and creed—THAT STANDS—

Mar. Alas! alas!

Trev. Oh! ere this bitter hour,
My soul had challeng'd fate to rend thee thence.
I lived for thee—lived *in* thee; thou wert life!
Seas might have swept between us; had'st thou died,
My faith had sent a thrill to pierce the stars
And reached thee there! The dead are not the lost—
They live in love!

Mar. But they—

Trev. They who have sought
In answering eyes the heart, and seen its mask;
Throbb'd to a breast that did not throb with truth;
Endow'd one shrine with the drain'd wealth of life—
Hope, feeling, thought,—then seen their idol prone,—
These, though they own one name, one home, one fate,
Are sever'd still!—Between their parted souls
There yawns a gulf that breaks upon despair!

Mar. Despair!

Trev. Oh, Margaret! I can bear no more. [*He goes off.*

Mar. [*after a pause*] Despair!
That word knells in my brain.—What am I?—
An ingrate who has stain'd his honour'd name,
Betray'd his joy, and forfeited the right
To share his anguish; though I would have shed
Drops from my heart, ere drawn them from his eyes!
An outcast from his love, yet at his side—
Fixed ever like the murderer of his peace,
My foot upon its grave! No, no; not that—
Why should my presence curse him? What's the name
Of wife? a sound—of home? There is no home
With treachery at the hearth! I go, Trevanion;
Thou shalt not see me more: I go—and whither?
What matters whither since I go from thee!
I have survived my life. My future void—
My past remorse, whose lightnings blind my hope;
And in my famished heart a cry for love—
The love I poisoned, and may taste no more!
Such is my doom! I earn'd—I feel my doom!
[*She sinks into a chair.*

END OF ACT II.

ACT THIRD.

SCENE I.—AN APARTMENT AT TREVANION'S.

Folding doors in the centre, chairs, &c.

Enter KNIGHTLY, *followed by* ROBERTS.

Knight. Why, what news is this I've listened to?—Mrs. Trevanion gone?

Rob. Yes, sir; it's the truth.

Knight. And no one can tell whither?

Rob. No one, sir.

Knight. Though it's now nearly three weeks—and so calmly, too—so secretly, without giving any notice or making preparation?

Rob. Yes, sir—merely leaving on her table a few words for my master.

Knight. Well? and he—

Rob. Ever since, sir, he's been shut up in his room—has denied himself to every one. Ah, sir! years seem to have gone over him, and there's a quietness about him that alarms us more than anger.

Knight. My poor master! Struck down by such a grief, how will he support the new burthen I must lay on him? How can I reveal it?—the result of my own folly—and yet it must be told. Roberts, I must see him.

Rob. Well, sir, you can directly, for to-day he is coming down; he leaves his room for the first time;—so, if you will take a seat in the library, I'll let him know that you've arrived.

Knight. Do so, Roberts—do so—and that my business is most urgent.

[KNIGHTLY *goes off;* ROBERTS *goes to the folding doors, opens them, and pauses.*

Rob. I hear his step. Yes; he's on the stairs, and now turns into the room, with the same sad look as yesterday, and fixed as if in sleep. [*A knocking is heard.*] The door—I'll go to it before I tell him who is here.

[*He goes off.*

TREVANION *comes from the folding doors slowly, and sinks into a chair.*

Trev. Do I dream? How changed seem all things! The very room is changed. Is it possible that we sat together in this room? Oh, misery! is this real? Three weeks since a trusting husband, rich in joy beyond all computation, credulous of good—now an awakened dupe, betrayed by her I loved—deceived, and then deserted—fled from, without a word, a look—with only the cold lines which told me of her flight to form the epitaph of a ruined life.

Enter ROBERTS, *followed by* MRS. LORIMER.

Rob. Mrs. Lorimer.

[*He retires again.* TREVANION *remains, without observing her.*

Mrs. Lor. Trevanion—dear Trevanion! Will you not speak to me—your friend?

Trev. My friend?

Mrs. Lor. May I not claim that name?

Trev. Doubtless—I am strangely forgetful. My friend, you're welcome. [*He rises, and places a chair for her.*

Mrs. Lor. Trevanion, I know your sufferings—all that has occurred. Ah! do not turn from me. If I would revert to the bitter past, it is because I would extract from it a medicine for the future.

Trev. The future?

Mrs. Lor. And you have one. In the prime of youth, surrounded by your friends, gifted with fine talents, is it for you to despair?

Trev. What is youth?—the impulse of the heart. Mine is quenched. What friendship?—the trust of the heart. Mine is dead. What energies?—the power of the heart. I have none. There is a blight more fatal to the tree than time or tempest—it is the worm that eats into its root.

Mrs. Lor. But should the failings of one being thus poison your trust in all?

Trev. Yes; when that being has become oneself—mingled with the very blood of life—thenceforth its current is diseased, and withers all that it flows through.

Mrs. Lor. Oh! did I not warn you that trust, without experience, might end in groundless disbelief? Yet pause: consider—have you done this poor girl justice—have you thought that her very love for you might have tempted her to wrong?

Trev. I know only that I trusted her—that she deceived me.

Mrs. Lor. And that she has bitterly repented—forget not that.

Trev. Were it so, the repentance that laments a sin cannot recal it.

Mrs. Lor. No, but should expiate it. Ah! had you felt this, she might yet have proved to you a devoted wife.

Trev. She was ashamed of her father;—shall I find the devoted wife in the ungrateful child?

Mrs. Lor. But that could be explained. And what if 'twas remorse—remorse that drove her from you?

Trev. Why not pride? She felt my presence a rebuke, and deemed, perhaps, that, by surrendering her position, her seeming disinterestedness might recover my esteem.

Mrs. Lor. These suspicions are cruel—are unworthy of you.

Trev. Perhaps so, but they have been taught me by wretchedness. Cruel did you say? I would give life to trust her again, though but for an hour. Could I be indifferent, I might be at peace; had my love perished with my confidence, this torture had been escaped—I might content myself, as thousands do, with the common interests of life. Ah! they only feel that the earth is a wilderness who once walked in an Eden, and have heard its gates close on them for ever.

Mrs. Lor. You still love her, then?

Trev. I remember her, and where love has once been, love and memory are the same. My first wish now is to learn whither she has fled, and at least to shield her from the sufferings of poverty.

Mrs. Lor. And you've no clue to her destination?

Trev. None.

Mrs. Lor. [*aside*] And yet where should she retreat but to the arms of her parents? Though her father left her in anger he may have forgiven her, may have tidings of her; I will go down to him at once, and desist not till I've found her.

Enter ROBERT.

Rob. Your steward has arrived, sir; and when you're at leisure—

Trev. I cannot see him.

Mrs. Lor. Nay, nay, Trevanion; is this just, when such interests are at stake? Think of your dependents.

Trev. True, true; let him enter. [ROBERT *crosses and goes off.*

Mrs. Lor. Ah, that was like yourself; and now, my friend, I'll leave

you; I go to make inquiries respecting one who claims our pity, but I trust soon to return and to be the bearer of good tidings.

[*She goes off.*

Enter KNIGHTLY.

Knight. [*aside*] For the first time I tremble in his presence, yet I meant all for the best. He's not thinking of me—what can I say to him?

Trev. [*looking up*] Well, Knightly?

Knight. Ah, Mr. Trevanion, I feel how little you've deserved your misfortunes and unhappiness.

Trev. Of course, of course; but you didn't travel from the mines to tell me this?

Knight. Alas! sir, I'm the messenger of new and heavy troubles; how will you bear them?

Trev. Try me.

Knight. Trouble, sir, which my own rashness has brought upon you; and yet I meant but to serve you.

Trev. And my evil stars were too strong for you? Well, go on.

Knight. And will you forgive me?

Trev. Pshaw! honesty, sir. What will my forgiveness better you?—is it gold, or bonds, or reversions?—what will forgiveness buy you? Come, come, your story?

Knight. You remember, then, that you authorised me, should the works continue unsuccessful, to suspend them?

Trev. Well.

Knight. The necessity arose, sir; to have gone on would have been madness—

Trev. And so fades another dream.

Knight. You also empowered me to reinvest your money?

Trev. Yes, yes; I trusted you in all things.

Knight. Ah, 'tis that which stabs me.

Trev. Stabs you?

Knight. In a word—you knew the destitution, the extreme scarcity of corn?—

Trev. I see; you could not bear that the men should starve; you resumed the works; they engulphed all I had left—cheer up, man, it was lost in a good cause.

Knight. Ah, do not crush me. There was a rumour of an importation; I disbelieved it,—there was a fall, I bought up for you largely,—prices rose; I sold again at a vast profit—

Trev. And enriched me by the starvation of thousands. Is that the truth?

Knight. Yet hear me, sir. I placed the proceeds in the neighbouring bank; the distress led to a disturbance; the bank was threatened, deposits were withdrawn, payment was suspended—suspended with a doubt that 'twill ever be resumed.

Trev. And if not I am ruined. Have you done?

Knight. Alas! no, sir; arrears were owing.

Trev. Arrears!

Knight. To your workmen, and in that bank—

Trev. They're lost. My honour's sacrificed!

Knight. Pity me; pardon me, sir!

Trev. My honour—that great trust I gave into your hands! My people famish—they brand my name with infamy—they curse me in the fierce justice of despair; and you, who stand there, and who dare to tell it, you have done this.

Knight. It was for your sake, sir; you had given all to them.

Trev. My name, my hopes, the thought that I should become a blessing to my race, these were all I had.

Knight. And how do they repay you, sir?—they feel only their own losses; they slander you for your misfortunes.

Trev. What of that? Can famine, with the vulture at its heart, take time to be impartial—or could it, do I take my cue from others?—must I be sordid, because they're ungrateful, and give colour to their injustice by my wrong?—Man, what have you done? Before this, Fate was heavy on me—my heart-strings were torn from what they clasped—home had become to me a sound—hope an angel beyond the grave. The riches of the world fled after those of the soul: this was much, but still, homeless, loveless, destitute, I had an unstained conscience. The wreck and blight had spared one thing—my truth; I could look up and say, "I am still a man"—now I cannot say it!

Knight. Strike me, slay me, I deserve it all.

Trev. What must be done?—it may not yet be too late for reparation. I will go to them—meet them—surrender all.

Knight. But they are furious against you; you must not for your life.

Trev. My life, sir! for my life!—follow me. [*They go off.*

Scene II.—PARLOUR OF LANGFORD'S HOUSE.

Mrs. Langford *is discovered at the back, looking from the door.*

Mrs. L. No—no signs of Michael yet, and careful as he is, I can't be very easy whilst I know he's in such a crowd, and no chance of its dispersing; the panic seems increasing,—the worst is yet to come. Good Powers! what a time—every shop in the town closed, and the streets filled with these poor miners who, wanting work themselves, wish to snatch the boon from others. This will bring suffering on hundreds, and yet I doubt if even the poorest will feel as wretched as ourselves. Ah! Margaret—Margaret, what misery you've given us—you've made us feel much older and much lonelier than we did. Poor Michael! it has almost broke his heart; and then to think she should never write to us—not a word since he came back, to say that she was sorry, or to explain how it occurred—to say even that she was in London—that there she was remaining and —— [Vox *is heard outside.*

Vox. Thank you—thank you, my good friend.

Mrs. L. Oh! Mr. Vox, I see—and——

[Vox *and* Miss Hornet *enter from the street.*

Vox. Well, Mrs. Langford; well, did you ever know anything like this?

Miss H. Such a frightful state of things!

Vox. Such a perfect dislocation of the whole structure of society!

Miss H. Terrible, indeed, sir.

Vox. Everything at a stand-still—violence even threatened.

Miss H. Whilst the author of all these blessings, the good Mr. Trevanion—

Mrs. L. He, ma'am! Why, I thought 'twas his steward was guilty?—

Miss H. His steward, Mrs. Langford!—and is it possible you can be imposed on by so palpable an artifice?

Vox. Such a worn-out resource. When are men ever in fault who have stewards about them—their recognised overalls, who take all the dirt?

Miss H. Creatures who put down abuse in their accounts.

Mrs. L. And you really mean to tell me that he did it himself?

Vox. Himself, ma'am—himself—this model philanthropist, who proves a mere jobber—who, when he fails in one outlay, embarks in another, and actually is capable of gambling in corn.

Miss H. Who first makes the distress by suspending his works, and then turns that very distress to a profit.

Mrs. L. Oh! no, Miss Hornet, can this be possible?

Vox. Possible—we've proof—you saw my last letter?

Miss H. Yes—you saw that last letter?

Vox. There's the whole case exposed—every step of it traced; and though it's true that had I foreseen its tremendous results, I might have suppressed it——

Miss H. Yes—we might have suppressed it.

Vox. Yet, bound as I was to unmask a pretender——

Miss H. Who, under the veil of benevolence, preyed on the poor.

Vox. How could I shrink from so overwhelming a duty?

Miss H. Yes—how could we shrink from so overwhelming a duty? At the same time, Mrs. Langford, we've respect for your feelings; the man is your son-in-law; and if you'd wish us to say a few words in his favour——

Vox. Exactly; if you'd like us to throw our shield over him——

Miss H. Why, of course, notwithstanding all we feel for his victims—[*the murmur of a crowd is heard in the distance.*] What was that?—A growl from the crowd? I hope those horrid creatures don't intend to be violent—to break in anywhere; the yeomanry wont be here for a couple of hours, when if half of 'em were seized, perhaps all the better——I must see what they're doing.

[*She goes to the door, and looks out.*

Vox. [*aside*] And now I'm alone I can deliver my message. Mrs. Langford, may I ask when you last heard from your daughter?

Mrs. L. My daughter?

Vox. Hush! my dear ma'am. Some time since, I suppose?

Mrs. L. Oh! yes, many weeks, sir, and you know not my fears.

Vox. Well, as that is the case, then——

Mrs. L. You have had news yourself?

Vox. But pray do be calm; to say the truth, she is here!

Mrs. L. Here?

Vox. In the town—has come down to see you; I met her by accident, as she was alighting at the inn.

Mrs. L. And you spoke to her?

Vox. Yes—learnt she'd been ill, and now trembled at the thought of meeting her father; so I said I should tell you, and——

Mrs. L. Thank you, sir—thank you.

Miss H. [*at the back*] No—Heaven be praised, they're not going my way. [*she turns and advances*] Well, Mrs. Langford—sorry we must leave you; but really we've so many friends we must see on this occasion——

Vox. Yes—so many who are anxious to know our share in this crisis.

Miss H. Exactly—exactly—our share in this crisis, that we really must go; but you'll remember my offer, if you should wish a word to be said for your son-in-law, why, of course we shall be happy to do what we can for him. Good morning, Mrs. Langford.

[*They go out at the back.*

Mrs. L. Here, here! Come all this way to see us, when we thought her so neglectful—so hard-hearted as we did, and ill, too—ill, all alone on the road—brought on no doubt by suffering—by her thinking about us!

Enter LANGFORD *from the street.*

Lan. There—I've seen enough to-day.

Mrs. L. Oh! Michael, Michael—I'm so glad to see you back.

Lan. Oh, there was no risk. I'm only vexed at the loss of time.

Mrs. L. But of course it's very frightful: and to think they should say the blame was not owing to the steward—that it's all his master's doing.

Lan. Do they? Well it's a judgment on him—a judgment on him, Lizzy, for marrying that girl!

Mrs. L. Oh! not so—not so.

Lan. But it is, I tell you; I said she'd prove a curse to him. However, don't let's talk of her—I'll go to my work.

Mrs. L. But put on another coat, Michael, for you're far from being strong—and this is a sad business, isn't it?

Lan. Yes, yes, [*looking round the room.*]

Mrs. L. And—and—what if it were to bring Mr. Trevanion down here?

Lan. I can't find my apron.

Mrs. L. Because, I was thinking, if it did, would he—come here—alone?

Lan. [*turning.*] Alone!

Mrs. L. Yes; that is to say—wouldn't—

Lan. Well?

Mrs. L. Wouldn't his wife also come—being near to her home?

Lan. And where's that?

Mrs. L. Where? [*pausing.*] Oh, Michael, can you ask that?

Lan. Here?

Mrs. L. Ah! if I might speak of her!

Lan. Silence! would you bring all back again? Don't let me hear her name!

Mrs. L. Oh, Margaret!

Lan. Do you hate me?

Mrs. L. Oh! no, no.

Lan. Then why do you speak of her?—of her who thought her father's love disgrace—

Mrs. L. You must have been mistaken.

Lan. She confessed it!

Mrs. L. And yet—is it not possible?—

Lan. She did, I tell you—her shame, if her husband met me, that she hid from him her birth and kept back the very letter that would have told it. But how often I have said this!—I'll talk of it no more. [*she sinks into a chair; he paces the room, and a hesitating tap is heard at the door.*] There's some one at the door.

Mrs. L. The door?—

[*a pause, and the tap is repeated.*

Lan. There—don't you hear it?

Mrs. L. Well—don't you go, Michael. I—

Lan. Why not? Why, how you look!—who is it that's coming in?

[*The door now slowly opens, and* MARGARET *appears at it.* MRS. LANGFORD *rises and totters towards her.*

Mrs. L. Margaret!

Mar. My mother! [*she advances, and falls on her neck.*

Lan. [*aside.*] And so—she's here?

Mrs. L. My child!

Lan. [*aside.*] Ah! this was well contrived. No husband brings her—no carriage at the door. She feels the shame of this unworthy roof—and steals into it in secret.

Mar. Father!—will you cast me off?

Lan. Cast you off, madam! Could I be guilty of such presumption? Could you fear you would be driven from a hearth so mean as this is?

Mar. My lips are parched,—a little water, mother!

Mrs. L. Surely, love—

[*She places her in a chair, then goes to a jug on a table at back, and fills a glass.*

Lan. [*aside.*] Why do I remain to be insulted by her presence?

Mrs. L. Here, love—take this.

Lan. Is that your breeding? Present it to the lady on a waiter.

Mrs. L. Oh! Michael—you'll break her heart!

Lan. Her heart!

Mrs. L. With all her faults, she is still your child: speak to her!

Lan. What shall I say? "Daughter, I'm a very humble man,—pray excuse me. I know my hands are coarse—but indeed they worked to maintain you; my speech is rude—but it answered your baby prattle fondly, and amused you with many a story when a child; these rough arms have often carried you when you were sick or weary, and never felt the weight; don't be ashamed of me!"—Shall I say that?

Mar. Father!

Lan. Or shall I ask pardon for intruding in the lady's drawing-room? "I *was* thoughtless, madam; but I so longed to see you—we had been parted for five years—I lay awake three nights with the thought of you; it was my love made me impatient. Forgive my disrespect,—forgive me, madam, for being your father!"

Mar. Hear me! You must—you shall! I never despised you. At a time when my last hope hung on the disclosure of a falsehood, you entered my room,—that disclosure you prevented: contempt was only to be avoided by an avowal, and for that end only I implored you to be gone.

Mrs. L. Go on, my child.

Mar. I have been guilty, but at least I have been punished. Take this as a proof:—To spare my husband a sight now odious, I have quitted him. I felt when I had lost his love, I had no title to his home; but I said "I have still another—my father's house will shelter me—my father's heart will open to the penitent!"

Mrs. L. Can you repulse her?

Lan. No; she shall have protection—all that she needs. I am just not harsh; but let her ask no more from the love that she despised. Was she not ashamed of me when she concealed my letter? The scorn that cankered my heart has eaten out her name.

Mrs. L. Then come to my arms, Margaret, you have still a parent—

Lan. You defy me, then?

Mrs. L. No, I love you better than you love yourself! It is your daughter who clings to me—for your sake I will cherish her. Michael, should you thrust me from your door, I will pray for you and depart—but her! I am your wife, and will never desert your child!

Lan. [*aside*] I am a fool—but she shan't see it. My hat—

Mrs. L. Where would you go?

Lan. No matter—I want air.

Mrs. L. But the air is keen, and you're but ailing—Margaret, your father's coat.

[LANGFORD *goes to the door, and as he lifts the latch* MARGARET *approaches him with his coat.*

Mar. Father!

Lan. Let me go. You should not have done this. [*pausing*] And so would she run to me when she was a child, and bring me my winter garments. You should not have done this, Margaret. [*He sits.* MARGRATE *kneels by his side.* MRS. LANGFORD *advances to him.*] Wife, I'll stay at home.

[*He embraces* MARGARET *hysterically. The scene closes in.*

SCENE II.—AN APARTMENT AT MISS HORNET'S.

Enter MISS HORNET, *followed by* VOX.

Miss H. But I tell you again, Vox, I think it very indelicate your taking to yourself the entire credit of this matter.

Vox. Myself! And are not you that self, Selina?—are we not one in sympathy—soon to be one in name? What matter to which of us the laurel is awarded?—I wear it for us both!

Miss H. Yes, and I win it for us both. Whose mind, sir, conceived that letter which has obtained you this importance?

Vox. Your mind, of course; but what is your mind, Selina? A fertile soil; but who supplied the seed? A copious reservoir; but who laid on the main?

Miss H. And so you pretend to have given me thoughts, when you could'nt find one for yourself.

Vox. And is that to be wondered at, when I have lavished them on others?

Miss H. Then I, who penned the composition, am entitled to no credit; whilst you, who did nothing, are to appropriate the whole?

Vox. Did nothing?—you must allow me to remind you that the letter itself was nothing—

Miss H. What do you say?

Vox. And that the whole effect produced by it was owing to my signature.

Miss H. Your signature!

Vox. Undoubtedly. You drew a bill—it was paper; I endorsed it—it was gold!

Miss H. And so all the effect has been produced by a mere name?

Vox. A mere name, my Selina! Why what else is reputation? By what is the world governed?—By a name! Without it, what's desert?—a beggar; and with it, what's imposture?—why, a prince. A name is the capital merit earns in its youth, and on the interest of which it subsists for ever after.

Enter SKILLET.

Skil. I beg pardon, Miss Hornet, but hearing Mr. Vox was here I ventured to step in.

Vox. Well, Skillet, well?

Skil. Just to say, sir, that the bank's gone; you know it was suspended, with the hope of renewing? Well it's gone down at last, and with all the remaining money of Mr. Trevanion.

Vox. Oh, it has, eh! it has?

Skil. And oddly enough he's arrived here almost at the moment it happened.

Vox. What a grand culmination!—the last great result of that extraordinary letter.

Skil. Exactly! so every one says, sir. It's the general belief it was caused by your letter.

Miss H. Ours sir, ours.

Vox. Such the power of mind, the sound that, sent through space, is able to extend its last vibration to the stars.

Skil. And as that is the case, sir, I'm bound to inform you that it's thought the letter's a libel, and will lead to a prosecution.

Vox. What do you say?

Skil. A prosecution, that must end in either fine or imprisonment.

Miss H. Vox!

Vox. Why, Selina, this seems to place you in a very serious position.

Miss H. Place me?

Vox. A position, I must say, of very considerable gravity.

Miss H. What for?

Vox. And is your mind so disturbed it can't connect cause and effect? That letter is the cause: you wrote that letter.

Miss H. Yes, but you signed it; and you'll remember you said that the signature's everything.

Vox. Yes, in literary matters.

Miss H. No, no, sir; in all things the signature's everything.

Skil. Well, and I agree with him, the signature *is* everything. Mr. Bland, the attorney, says, whoever signs a libel adopts it, and must undergo its penalties.

Vox. Pooh! nonsense!

Miss H. And very justly, too; for what were your own words—I drew a bill and it was paper; you endorsed it and it was gold.

Skil. Yes, and it may become iron if you get into gaol.

Vox. Don't be absurd, sir.

Miss H. Really, this seems to place you in a very serious position.

Vox. But it's you, ma'am, it's you; all the fruit of your own mind.

Miss H. True; but what is my mind, Theophilus? A fertile soil; but who supplied the seed? A copious reservoir—

Vox. Oh, I wish you were at the bottom of it.

Skil. Only of course whoever wrote it is equally culpable; so as the punishment's twofold, it may, perhaps, be divided; one may be fined, and the other imprisoned.

Vox. Well, I should prefer the fine.

Miss H. Why that's the same thing; for as you never could pay it, you'd go to gaol after all. [*A loud knocking is heard.*

Vox. Holloa! who can that be?

Skil. Some one in haste, and so very decided that I shouldn't at all wonder if—

Vox. Wonder if what, sir? You don't think it's a constable!

Skil. Yes! [*Looking off.*] No, the door's open, and now I can see—

Miss H. See who, sir? Do speak.

Skil. Why, as I live, Mrs. Trevanion.

Miss H. Mrs. Trevanion!

Skil. Yes, her own self; and her voice is so clear that——she's inquiring for both of you.

Miss H. Why, what can she want with us?

Vox. Oh, it's concerning this failure, that you may be quite sure.

Miss H. My good Mr. Skillet, would you oblige us by learning? Would you say we're engaged, and bring the news to the next room?

Skil. Well, if you wish it, with pleasure. [*He goes off.*

Vox. Selina, I'm really afraid we're in trouble.

Miss H. Well, to be perfectly candid, Mr. Vox, so am I.

Vox. With no way of escape but a very unpleasant one.

Miss H. Which unpleasant one is—

Vox. To throw ourselves at once on her husband's good nature.

Miss H. Awkward, indeed; but if it's not to be helped, why—

Vox. And yet really I think if we were able to show him that, whatever its damage, the attack was not personal—

Miss H. Exactly, exactly.

Vox. That we assailed not the man, but a system of his, he'd really feel bound to overlook the whole matter.

Miss H. And perhaps our very frankness might secure his esteem.

[*They go off.* SKILLET *returns, followed by* MARGARET.

Skil. Yes, madam, he's here, but I believe he's engaged.

Mar. But I must see him, I must; I stand upon no courtesies, the aim that brings me overleaps such trifles.

Skil. But if you'll acquaint me with your errand—

Mar. Is it needed, sir? My husband, my husband, he's in danger; the men who thronged your streets are now hurrying to beset him.

Skil. Indeed!

Mar. Deceived—enraged—the dupes and tools of others; they view and seek him as the author of their wrongs; his life may be the cost.

Skil. No, no, madam; I trust not.

Mar. Who, then, should restrain them but he who roused their fury? Whatever its abasement, its suffering to himself, go say that I command him; and yet—no, no—is he not my friend?—to-day did he not offer to intercede for me with my father? Say that I implore him—that I beseech him to assist me.

Skil. I will, madam, instantly. [*He goes off.*

Mar. Ruined—threatened—charged even with dishonour—Trevanion! he for whom honour was another name—none to deliver—not even to console him! Does justice sleep? Is it not enough his trust and love were wrecked—but even that which misfortune should revere, his honour, should be stained? Oh, to feel this, but to feel it vainly—able to lament, but impotent to save!

Enter MRS. LANGFORD.

Mrs. L. Well, Margaret, have you seen him?

Mar. But why impotent? Has misery no strength—repentance no source?

Mrs. L. For the crowd there seem increasing.

Mar. Is no way left to yield him this one proof?

Mrs. L. Margaret!

Mar. Deeds, deeds, mother!—his life may now be counted by its throbs! Know you none who can save him, though I ask it on my knees? Well, then, come the worst—his assailants. I will face them! They may be suffering, they may be desperate, but misery has its instincts; and in my anguish they would respect their own.

Mrs. L. Nay, this is but a dream!

Mar. It may be so, but dreams have been revelations; 'tis my last hope, and it buoys up existence.

Enter SERVANT.

Ser. Mrs. Trevanion, a lady is at the door inquiring for you, named Lorimer.

Mar. Ah! deliverance!

Mrs. L. My child!

Mar. My friend, my friend! My cry was not in vain!

[*She rushes off, followed by* MRS. LANGFORD.

SCENE IV.—THE PARLOUR OF THE LODGE.

An old Oaken Apartment, opening through door in centre, on a lawn.

[TREVANION *is discovered seated at a table;* KNIGHTLY *is seen at door at back, looking out. A murmur of voices outside.*

Voices. We will see him—we will!

Knight. You hear, sir, something must be done; we must at least give them a promise.

Trev. To be broken? No; I'll meet them!

Knight. And increase their fury?

Trev. I have a fiercer strife within—give way!

[*The murmur is renewed—he rises.*

Knight. Not so, sir; if there must be a victim, 'tis myself—the author of their suffering! Yet I have one hope to appease them; I can rely upon a friend to obtain a small supply, and this sum I will pledge them.

[*He goes out at the back;* TREVANION *sinks again into the chair.*]

Trev. And such, then, is the end! So fades the airy structure I thought earth! That world which in my very boyhood I projected—which I resolved to found with all my energies and fortune—on which I hoped to rear a nobler humanity, by inviting labour to teach self-reliance—by excluding want, to avert its rancours—by giving toil its leisure to bestow upon it thought—and prove the atmosphere of love was also that of virtue. And what have I attained? Their misery whom I would have blessed; for their love, their malediction; for their reverence, their scorn. Oh, dreamer! Oh, illusion! Oh, reality!

[*He sinks upon the table*—KNIGHTLY *returns from the back.*

Knight. Strange to say, sir, they've retired.

Trev. Retired?

Knight. Yes; they dispersed as I approached them; and now, whilst the calm lasts, you will rouse yourself—you will prepare for your departure.

Trev. My departure?—

Knight. Have you not consented to it? Do you not see its necessity, till your affairs can be arranged?—

Trev. Well, well?

Knight. That it's essential to your safety to enable me to act with vigour; so you will do as I desire, whilst I leave you to obtain this succour.

Trev. I will—I will.

Knight. That's right—that's right. Come, come, sir—courage! there are brighter days in store.

Trev. Brighter days! 'Tis love that makes their light, and mine—

Knight. Has been betrayed, and should therefore be forgotten.

Trev. Yes; joy perishes, and you would take from me remembrance. [KNIGHTLY *goes out at the back.*] My departure! I had forgotten that, the last drop in the cup, and yet is it the bitterest. Bereavement and privation! these composed my fate—a fate now stamped by the signet of dishonour! My aims all frustrated—my means of deliverance gone—my presence only feeding the hate I flew here to appease—what course is there left but to avoid the spot I shame? And yet that spot—that country is my own! Ah! last of ties, must you also be broken?

[MARGARET *now appears at the door, and grasps it to support herself.*

Mar. He is there, but now when I need my courage most—

Trev. Exiled! utterly alone.

Mar. And yet I must speak. Sir—

[*He turns, and seeing her starts back.*

Trev. Who's there? What image of past happiness taunts me with its loss?

Mar. [*advancing.*] My husband!

Trev. Madam!

Mar. Pardon me; pardon my presumption that I used that name.

Trev. Well, madam, what brought you hither?

Mar. I am aware I had no warrant, but I heard of your misfortunes, of your injuries; I heard also from your steward of your intention to leave England; I felt, therefore, 'twas possible that we might never meet again, and I presumed—I dared to wish—I could not resist the wish to intrude on you once more, to hear your voice; I felt that my heart could live through all wretchedness on the memory of that look, on the echo of that voice.

Trev. And was this your sole hope?

Mar. No! if you will let me utter it I had another, a higher and a sweeter one, but faint as it was precious. I left you in affluence, rich in every comfort, in friends, in reputation;—I find you now poor, solitary, bowed—bowed by the weight of calumny!—I said, "Perhaps he may permit me now to serve him: I had no claim to his prosperity—I have one to his afflictions. I was an outcast from his home, but I may follow him through the desert."

Trev. You—you know not, madam, what you ask, or how bitter is the lot you speak of.

Mar. Bitter—bitter, if with you? [*He turns from her.*] Oh! listen to me. I ask not for your love—I seek but your endurance. I have talents and education—I would work for you. How sweet would be such labour! Were you ill, I would watch by you—when lonely, I would talk with you—when you chose, I would be dumb. I ask not your regard—not a smile nor kind word from you;—I entreat but to be with you.

Trev. Oh, if I could blot out the remembrance of one hour!

Mar. You do not answer!—you are too good to upbraid me. But I know what are your thoughts!

Trev. That you are human,—that you were tempted!

Mar. Yes, but not by ambition! Oh! know the truth. Indeed I loved you! but for that you had known all. Often I was about to tell you. It might have driven me from my home—from the sphere of taste and luxury. It might have disgraced me in the eyes of the refined circle

I had entered;—still conscience cried "Confess," but there was a power mightier than even conscience—love, selfish and perverted, but still omnipotent; I thought of your abhorrence—I was silent, and I fell—

Trev. Well, Margaret, well—you will at least remember 'twas your own act severed us; that you fled from me.

Mar. I did!

Trev. And—and should you seek my door again, still it would stand open—

Mar. To me—to me!—your home would again be mine?

Trev. Be yours.

Mar. Ah! but at what cost? I have thought only of myself. Could you bear my presence? Should I not cast on your hearth the dark reflection of my guilt?—should I not haunt you like a spectre of the past? The truth—the truth, I do beseech you! Can you trust me?

Trev. I—I could pity you, forgive you, Margaret; I could love you.

Mar. But no; not trust me. I thought as much—I knew I'd no right to hope it—your hand your hand—[*kissing it*]—I seal my heart on it—its gratitude, its prayers—and now farewell, farewell for ever.

[*She turns, and is going out at the back.*

Enter Mrs. Lorimer.

Trev. Stay.

Mrs. Lor. Margaret?

Mar. [*going*] Not now, not now.

Mrs. Lor. Remain; I command you. Trevanion, what is this; you know all?

Trev. All?

Mrs. Lor. That your honour has been preserved, the claims upon you satisfied.

Trev. And by you, my friend? I might have guessed it.

Mrs. Lor. Not by me.

Trev. By whom, then?

Mrs. Lor. Does no thrill in your own bosom answer?

Trev. Speak, I implore you. Who banished danger from my hearth—who cleared my name from slander?

Mrs. Lor. She who bears that name, whose place was by that hearth—your wife.

Trev. My wife!

Mar. Cease, madam, I beseech you.

Trev. Nay, speak, speak—tell me all. You've held a cup, a brimming cup to a soul consumed by its own thirst,—withdraw the draught and I perish.

Mrs. Lor. By her own means she has redeemed you; by a sum that I intended as a marriage portion, and which she then refused. To-day, however she claimed it, but concealed from me its aim; inquiry revealed it—it was to save her husband's honour.

Trev. Margaret!

Mrs. Lor. It's the truth!

Trev. And in secret. She would have left me without the knowledge of her goodness. Oh, silent devotion!—brighter than honour, richer than wealth, had my mines been quarried gold; 'tis bliss, 'tis life, 'tis trust once more! Margaret—my wife!

Mar. I am again your own.

[*He extends his arms; she rushes into them.* Langford *and his wife appear at the door.*

Lan. She is there—and in his arms!

Trev. Margaret! Margaret! is this no delusion?

Mar. Oh, do not speak! my heart's so full another throb would rend it!

Mrs. L. Nay, one thrill more, look round—

Mar. My parents! [*They advance; she seizes their hands.*

Trev. Say *our* parents, Margaret!

Lan. She's not ashamed of us now.

Mrs. L. Was she ever?

Mrs. Lor. And now, Trevanion, confess that you have a future.

[*He takes* MARGARET'S *hand.*

As for your fortunes, Margaret's husband must not refuse the aid I would have forced upon herself.

Trev. My heart's thanks—less for what you would bestow than for what you have restored.

Mrs. Lor. No longer the dreamer who demands perfection, nor the sceptic who distrusts worth, what a life of service is before you.

Trev. Yes, for I have regained my faith. Again my heart expands—again would I devote my energies to the happiness of others.

Mar. And should you meet with errors in those whom you cherish?

Trev. My own errors will teach me forbearance. I will think, too, how much that is noblest in our nature may lie hidden beneath its failings, and that the surest antidote to wrong is the love that nourishes the right.

FINIS.

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